Peripheralising Patriarchy? Gender & Identity in Post-Soviet Art. A View from the West.

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Introduction

The exhibition catalogue, *After the Wall* (Stockholm-Berlin1999) asserted that body-based art has been a major means for representing the identity crises invoked in central and Eastern Europe by the geo-political changes since 1989.[1] The assertion finds endorsement from other recent presentations of art discourse from the former East – for example the special internet edition of *Moscow Art Magazine*, no.22, 1998, the catalogues for *Body and the East* (Ljubljana 1998) and *Private Views* (Tallinn/London 1998-9), and numerous articles in *n.paradoxa* since 1997.

This paper looks at some practices from the ex-Soviet bloc which seem to relate to the impact of the centre-periphery model of economic and power relations on ideological constructs of gendered identity. The overall intention, is to consider, from a Western viewpoint, the problematic nature of gender issues within a nascent, East European post-colonial discourse, that may be argued to be partly exemplified by these works and the critical theory which supports them. The central theme is an alleged 'collapse of patriarchy', identified in two very different, and to some extent mutually contradictory arguments, deriving from different contexts, but both targeted on Western audiences in the late 1990s. One of these arguments, put forward by Russian writers Olesya Turkina and Viktor Mazin in *After the Wall*, locates this collapse of patriarchy, via Freudo-Marxist and Lacanian constructs, at the level of male psychological identity. The other argument, mounted by the Spanish-born but American-based sociologist, Manuel Castells in volume two of his study, *The Information Age*, claims a disintegration of patriarchal structures at socio-economic levels.

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What emerges from studying a range of body-based practices – mainly but not exclusively as illustrated in *After the Wall* - I argue, is an apparent paradox. Some practices seem to represent the experience of economic and social marginality as a loss of national and personal virility. Other practices and discourse point, in contradiction to Castells, to the survival and intensification of patriarchy, phallocentrism and sexism, in which women seem to be partly complicit. This can be argued to be partly rooted in the lingering impact of dominant Soviet cultural constructs of the New Man and ostensibly liberated and equal woman, noted by East European writers including Edit Andras and Bojana Pejic to underpin the differences in the operation of patriarchy between the East and the West. Such differences, while noted by Castells, seem to be discounted. His argument conflates the collapse of communism with a Western theoretical model of the collapse of the patriarchal family, apparently in order to include Eastern Europe as a beneficiary of globalisation. In relation to these conflicting definitions of a collapse of patriarchy, the difference in context, is, I suggest crucial and complex. Turkina and Mazin's essay, like the art works that I will discuss, arguably represents a particular trajectory of an emerging East European post-colonial discourse, which seems to raise issues of gender in order to assert cultural difference, and to maintain a critical relation with the Western liberal-democratic approach to 'integration'. This aspect of post-colonial debate seems however tentative in expression, and conscious of East European preference for gender-free modes of discourse, exemplified most radically by the writings of Slovenian critical theorist, Slavoj Zizek. Zizek seems to suggest that gendered issues of ethnic difference can be too easily 'depoliticized' by the integration strategies, of

what he calls the 'multicultural tolerance', of Western liberal democracy, thereby distracting attention from globalized capitalism itself as a significant causal condition for the localized problems and inequalities. Castells, as an authoritative Western voice speaking from within the US university system, not only provides much useful data about Western strategies, but also may be seen to exemplify one aspect of them that does, indeed, depoliticize the cultural differences between the West and the former East in the interests of globalized capital. I also argue that *After the Wall*, particularly as it is presented by chief editor, David Elliott, may be seen as another example of this kind of triumphalist depoliticisation, facilitated by the very tentativeness of the discourse on gender which its East European contributions convey.

In relation to these examples, Zizek would seem to have a valid point. His own model of gender-free post-colonial discourse seems less colonisable. It involves a 'radical re-politicisation to the left', a reinvention of Marxist grand narrative in opposition to capitalism, dealing in 'universal' rather than localized 'wrongs'. It also attempts to refocus postmodern political debate on globalisation, around issues of ideology. I conclude, however, that Zizek's model denies the critical potential of conjoining post-war French interpretations of Marx and Lacan with aspects of the Freudo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School, to mount a critique of ideology that includes constructs of gender. Ultimately it seems to reinvoke the gender-free politics of post-1930s Soviet Marxism-Leninism. As such it offers no threat either to the entrenched patriarchalism of the East, or to the Europatriarchy of the Western cultural world into which Zizek himself has already been inserted.

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A view from the West

The perspective taken by this paper is informed by aspects of Western discourse on the social histories of art, feminism, cultural studies and post-colonialism. Hence the concern with art as a product of specific socio-economic contexts. Hence, also, the critical focus on the operation of patriarchy. Within this paper the term 'patriarchy' is used broadly to characterise both socio-economic and psychological structures of power relations in which the interests of women are positioned as subordinate to those of men, and/or where the subordinate 'feminine' position may also be occupied by economic classes and even entire nations.[2] This construct of patriarchy – unlike Castells' – does not necessarily depend on the institutionalisation of the patriarchal family or on particular forms of state government, but may be argued to operate even in social systems where legislation on equal rights and opportunities exists. In this respect I am interested in the extent to which some of the ideas generated by the Frankfurt School and referred to by East European theorists, might be used to criticise the globalising efforts of Western liberal democracy.

What I mean in this paper by 'liberal-democratic' may be partly summarised in the words of Raymond Wiilliams: 'a doctrine of certain necessary sorts of freedoms but also, and essentially, a doctrine of possessive individualism'.[3] Rooted in the nineteenth-century economic theories of Adam Smith, the liberal democratic approach appears to prioritise the market above politics and the individual above society.[4] In contemporary socio-economic terms, liberal democratic freedoms are constituted on the one hand by support for free elections, legalistic measures to protect the rights of individuals and weak statements in support of multicultural diversity. On the other

hand these freedoms are characterised by insistence on privatisation of national resources and the growth of a free market economy. Private property and individual accumulation of wealth are seen as sacrosanct within this model. The central assumption is that capitalism is good and globalized capitalism, managed through international institutions such as multinational corporations, the IMF and the World Bank, is even better, despite the social and national inequalities that it may produce.[5] My paper shares the critical attitude to this assumption adopted not only by Western post-colonial theorists such as Hoogvelt but also by Zizek and other East European critics of globalisation.

In discussing the development of post-colonial discourse in Eastern Europe, the terms 'East' and 'West' are used deliberately in this paper. The 'imagined geographies' conjured by the terms, are ideological constructs that Giroux has suggested relate to each other 'in ways that are both complicitous and resistant, victim and accomplice'.[6] This Cold War binary, East/West, and all its ideological baggage are central to the debate because they have been elements of external norms signified in language, that have become integral to constructs of selfhood and identity on both 'sides'.[7] The geopolitical changes that sparked off identity crises in the East also create identity crises for the West that seem to encourage mutual recourse to a redrawn centre-periphery model of world economic/power relations.

This is still a powerful construct, even though the locations are now only partly geopolitical. The centre has to some extent shifted to a virtual space of globalized flows of capital and information, while gradations of peripherality are partly marked by levels of access to these flows by groups and classes of people that cut across

national boundaries.[8] Nevertheless geopolitical boundaries do exist between nation states that have more or less control over access to these flows. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR between1989 and 1991, it would seem, as Delanty suggests, that Eastern Europe has become 'a disadvantaged periphery of the West' resulting in an increase rather than decrease in Western chauvinism.[9]

In engaging with emergent Eastern European post-colonial discourse from a Western viewpoint, it is not my intention to reinscribe this new 'hierarchy of civilisations'.[10] I have chosen to focus mainly on presentations about the post-Soviet condition that are orchestrated by and targeted on the West, in an attempt at 'understanding and making visible how Western knowledge is encased in historical and institutional structures that privilege and exclude'. [11]

Collapse of patriarchy

In *After the Wall,* Turkina and Mazin's essay ' In the Time When the Great Stories Collapse' offers a theorisation of the contemporary East European identity crisis as a collapse of patriarchy, in diagnostic psychoanalytical terms, blending concepts appropriated from Francois Lyotard and Jacques Lacan with ideas seemingly derived from Western Freudo-Marxists, such as Herbert Marcuse, Joel Kovel and Christopher Lasch. According to Turkina and Mazin, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 precipitated the collapse of the two 'Great Stories', of heroic communist equality and its alternative, Western democratic capitalism, around which East European identity was constructed. They argue in Lacanian terms that this equated to a collapse of the phallic, symbolic order.[12] The illusion of wholeness of subject identity, visually and linguistically constructed and maintained by that symbolic order, therefore also

collapsed, resulting in a regression to a pre-Oedipal state, similar to that described by Kovel as corollary to the collapse of the patriarchal family: 'the individual becomes all too readily suffused with pre-oedipal fantasy and subject to experiences of personal disintegration'. [13]

Turkina and Mazin argue that the East European subject has become infantilized, full of fragmentary drives, 'polymorphous perversity'[14] and narcissism, which, like Kovel (1984) and Lasch (1979) they seem to see as maintained by the shift to a consumer society. This replaces the patriarchal 'big other' with an undifferentiated otherness which creates and manipulates individuals' needs in relation to the needs of administration and consumption.[15] Unlike Kovel and Lasch, however, they treat the heart of the problem as the loss of the symbolic father rather than the failure of the mother, and they are concerned not with the demise of the patriarchal family but with the double loss of a patriarchal communist political system and its mythic, but equally patriarchal opposite.[16] Turkina and Mazin also borrow from the language of therapy to assert that this loss, and the resulting fragmentation of the ideological body 'should be either mourned or worked through or interiorized or idealized', implying these to be the activities with which body-based contemporary art engages.[17] There are a number of male artists whose work can and has been located as strategic responses to, or staged enactments of this loss of patriarchal identity as inscribed in the male body. While some make explicit reference to aspects of Soviet patriarchal mythology, their emphasis, however, seems to be on the effects of globalized capitalism in maintaining the identity loss. For instance, works by Estonian Jaan Toomik and Polish artist Zbigniew Libera seem to exemplify – and in Libera's case satirize – regressive desire

to reinstate the phallic order deriving from processes of interiorisation and idealisation.

Toomik's video *Father and Son* 1998, represents Toomik ice-skating naked to a soundtrack of his young son singing a medieval French hymn. This is implied by critics Raul Kurvitz and Iris Muller Westermann to represent a pursuit of a god-like wholeness of identity in opposition to the fragmentation maintained by consumer culture.[18] All references to such culture – apart from the ice-skates – have been stripped away to leave a vision of man in a 'natural' state moving harmoniously in juxtaposition with the frozen Baltic landscape. The video seems to present a masculine ideal ego that is both Romantic and heroic, suggesting the superhuman strength of body and mind required to withstand the cold. Spirituality and purity are implied, not just by the asceticism of the act represented, but also by the soundtrack that reaches back into the European past to evoke an imagined, lost moment of stability, beauty and transcendence. This transcendentalism, combined with the openness of the title to religious interpretations, makes the video seem to offer a reassertion of the transcendental signified of patriarchy – God the Father – that relates to the revival of religion across Eastern Europe.

By contrast, Libera's hilarious, faux advertising poster, *Universal Penis Expander* 1995 (Fig. 1) – displayed next to a board containing full instructions for use and training tips - seems to comment ironically on the crisis in phallocentric culture and the futility of idealisation as a means to overcome this crisis. The poster borrows from the visual language of gym culture and especially from advertisements for exercise equipment designed to 'train' specific parts of the body with the implicit

promise of miraculous transformation, not just of the body but also of the user's psyche and lifestyle. Libera's poster indeed demonstrates the miraculous powers of the dream machine, juxtaposing it with an image of a young man with an enormously long penis. This exaggeration of male fantasy to the point of uselessness, absurdity and physical impracticability, seems to disclose desires to regress to an omnipotent ideal ego, as marking the infantilising relationship between consumer culture and patriarchal desire.[19] It also recalls Lasch's observation: 'the propaganda of consumption turns alienation itself into a commodity'.[20]

Among those works which might be seen as 'working through' the loss at a most generalised level, are performances based on public acts of self-humiliation implying loss of masculine, human identity, by Armenian artist Azat Sargsyan, and two leading proponents of 'Moscow Actionism', Oleg Kulik and Alexander Brener. While only Brener and Kulik have been identified by East European critical theorists as infantile and narcissistic, all three could be defined as narcissistic in the sense that their performances imply a self-absorption based on feelings of alienation.[21]

Sargsyan's performance *Welcome to the Wall* 1999, at *After the Wall* – a version of a previous performance illustrated in the catalogue (Fig. 2) – positioned the artist as reduced to the status of doormat, an inanimate and insignificant commodity. Wearing a coat stencilled with the English word 'WELCOME', he lay at the entrance to the exhibition, where Western visitors had to step over him in order to consume the art of the 'liberated' East. Armenian critic Edward Balassarian interpreted this action as an expression of dissent towards the post-Soviet condition and in particular to the 'walls'

of constraint that exist beneath the surface appearance of post-Soviet creative freedom.[22]

The implication, that the new conditions for culture are dehumanising, can also be seen in some performances by Oleg Kulik. Since 1994, Kulik has become famous for naked performances as an inquisitive and territorially aggressive dog (Fig. 3). On occasion, for example at *Interpol*, Stockholm in 1996, he has bitten gallery visitors or art critics who invade his space.[23] At *It's a Better World*, Vienna 1997, he was paraded around on a leash by his partner Mila Bredikhina,[24] and in the same year at one-man show at Deitch projects in New York, *I Bite America and America Bites Me,* he was displayed in a pen for fifteen days. Kulik's dog persona, badly-behaved and in need of strict controls, represents how he believes the West to view post-Soviet Russia: 'When independent Russia became open, Western illusions about it disappeared – we became a malign, loveless creature, like a mad dog'.[25]

Reference to a loss of human masculinity seems implicit in the ways that the two men, Kulik and Sargsyan, used identifications with non-human commodity objects to represent alienation. In Brener's performance *Rendezvous*, 1994 (Fig. 4), the reference was very explicit. The performance comprised an attempt by Brener to have sex with his wife in Pushkin Square, Moscow, culminating with his despairing cry: 'I cannot make it. I cannot make anything'. According to Brener, the location was important because it was the site of actions by dissident Soviet artists. It seems that he wanted to highlight the dissolution of the dissidents' dreams of democracy, creative freedom and inclusion into the West, claiming that: 'I did not just represent the defeat of the Russian artist, but of the whole contemporary art'.[26]

Brener's enactment of impotence might be seen in Lacan's terms both as a confirmation that 'There is no sexual relation', and as symbolic enactment of the impotence of the individual usually veiled by the ego's identification with the – now defunct - 'symbolic father'.[27] It might also be seen, alongside the performances of Sargsyan and Kulik, as representing symptoms of the alienating psychological effects of consumer capitalism as theorized by Marcuse. According to Marcuse, within capitalist society the primacy of the 'performance principle' generates 'surplus repression' – a situation in which instincts are restricted in the interests of this dominating principle. Not only does this have a devastating effect on sexuality, because eros and pleasure in themselves have no practical value in the generation of capital, but the alienated human subject is depersonalized, reduced to a commodity.[28] All three artists seemed to locate the source of their alienation in experiences of marginality relative to the Western art world, as a specific aspect of post-Soviet economic conditions, and to place their art practices in a critical relation to these conditions.[29] In *Moscow Art Magazine* no.22 1998, while Brener defined the Eastern, and particularly the Russian artist as having been relegated to 'Third World' status, Kulik raised the question 'To Bite or to Lick?' Roughly translated, Kulik's question identified a dilemma for East European artists - whether to seek easy incorporation into the Western art market, or to refuse this and stay on the margins, seeking a separate artistic identity.[30] The question was and is not trivial.

After the initial honeymoon period initiated by the Sotheby's Moscow auction of contemporary official and 'unofficial' art in August 1988, the Western art market's interest in contemporary art from the East cooled fairly rapidly following the collapse

of the USSR in 1991-2.[31] From this point onwards, it was largely money from the growing number of Soros foundations that enabled artists from the East to enter legitimating spaces of the Western art world.[32] Even so, within the market, attention seemed mainly restricted to artists whose work still fitted the Cold War model of 'dissident' and therefore valuable art. Among these artists were Komar & Melamid who, for example, were chosen to represent Russia at the Venice Biennale in 1997 alongside Sergei Bugaev, although, unlike Bugaev, they had been living in the USA since 1976.[33] While this choice could be interpreted as a re-colonisation of these artists to re-present them in the context of the more recent Moscow conceptualism of Bugaev, it might also be seen in Kulik's terms, as 'licking' – a reassurance of Russian compliance with Western taste and values.

Getting into the Western market seems to have been not just a left-over, dissident utopian dream, but economic pragmatism for artists of the ex-Soviet bloc. In the years that followed 1989, cultural infrastructures crumbled, propped up here and there by injections of foreign capital. The all but bankrupt new government structures seemed to have no choice but to follow the Western model of marginalizing culture from its once focal place in the Soviet regime.[34]

From Manuel Castells' analysis it would seem that the West had some responsibility for these economic conditions, through its policies of 'managed exclusions' from economic and political networks. During the late 1990s, for example, while Russia, the CIS[35] and Ukraine remained on the margins, investments of $11 billion in selected aspects of the economies of Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia and the Czech

republic – taking advantage of lower labour costs – promised projections for 20% annual growth. Meanwhile Western military and economic organisations, NATO and the EU have been grooming these countries, plus Croatia, for inclusion on a carefully restricted basis.[36]

The initial problems for Russia (and by implication CIS, Ukraine and Bulgaria) may have been with backwardness in information technology, and a failing economy tied to a closed currency. Castells, however, suggests quite convincingly with regard to Russia, that fears of nuclear capability, and knowledge of the interpenetration of globalized crime networks in state economic structures, were key factors in Western exclusionary tactics. He argues that Western governments were prepared to turn a blind eye to the mafia connections, as long as Russia remained politically subdued under its pro-Western leadership. At the same time, however, institutional and publicly mediated knowledge of these connections affected market confidence, and thus willingness to invest.[37] This seems to have had a knock-on effect on CIS, Ukraine and Bulgaria. The late 1990s were punctuated with government actions or statements in all of these countries signifying willingness to address the crime problem, under pressure from Western economic organisations such as the IMF and World Bank.[38]

In this Western-orientated context of managed exclusion and diminished authority of the East European state, Russian painter Georgii Gurianov and Bulgarian body-artist Rassim Kristev appear to offer strategic responses which both mourn and ironically work through, the central cultural model for Soviet identification – the embodiment of the 'New Man' – revised in relation to the demands of consumer capitalism.

Gurianov's painting *Baltic Fleet*, 1994 (Fig. 5) refers back – nostalgically, in the opinion of Turkina and Mazin - to the heroic representations of sailors and sportsmen generated by Aleksandr Deineka (Fig. 6) and Aleksandr Rodchenko, that constituted leading images of the 'New Man' in the late 1920s-30s.[39] In their day, such images bathed in the bright sunlight of socialism, stood for a patriarchal, utopian ideal of rectified humanity whose moral and ideological purity and 'partymindedness' was reflected in the strength, youth and vigour of their bodies.[40] Within the Soviet system the disciplines of psychology and physiology were focused on theorising the nature and possible evolution of the New Man, while education, sport, art, literature and other forms of propaganda had responsibility for producing – or, after 1940, facilitating the self-production of - the New Man.[41] Images of the 'New Man' represented a transcendent ideal, they were icons of the ideological body as it might be in all its wholeness, for ideological consumption and physical emulation. Gurianov's sultry sailor, however, reduces the ideal to an object of material consumption, an image of the male body for sale.

Kristev's photographs *Corrections* 1996-8 (Fig. 7) also engage with this notion of the commodification of the male body. They seem to represent an ironic meeting-point between the post-1940 voluntarism of the New Man construct – the notion that the new humanity could create itself by attention to *fizkultura* (physical culture) – and the obsession of Western gym culture with creating the 'body beautiful'.[42] The photographs also potentially engage with Soviet educational emphasis, again after 1940, on identification with real-life 'hero' role-models, insofar as they were authoritatively perceived to embody characteristics of the ideal.[43] Part of Kristev's

self re-creation lies in the adoption of the forename Rassim, which links him with the Turkish and muslim ethnic 'other' in Bulgaria.[44] The physical transformation is, however, claimed by Kristev to be a product of international capital since he was supplied with vitamins and proteins by French financiers.[45] His own body, thus, has become a commodity, an object for visual consumption as a possible role-model of the 'new' New Man, in what Dimitrjevic and Andjelkovic have called an act of 'critical narcissism'.[46]

From a Lacanian perspective, the images of Gurianov and Kristev might be held to refer specifically to the loss of the Soviet symbolic order. Viewed from Marcuse's stance, and its extension by Kovel, they might also be argued to attest once more to the way that consumer capitalism reduces the self to the level of a commodity object.[47]

If, as Marcuse and Kovel suggest, selfhood in consumer society depends upon commodification and consumption, then rejection by the market must deal a further blow to identity.[48] Arsen Savadov's photograph *Donbas-Chocolat,* from the series *Deepinsider* 1997 (Fig. 8) – made in collaboration with Oleksandr Kharchenko -, refers to an Ukrainian industry in deep crisis, forced into marginality by the impact of globalized capitalism. The image is full of ambiguities and contrasts - dirty, sweaty, male coal-miners in a dark shower room, two naked and two wearing ballerina tutus, delicate fabric juxtaposed with grimy muscle and hairy chests. The challenging stares of the three men in the foreground make it seem that the photographers/viewers have intruded on a private, possibly homoerotic, ritual of cross-dressing. There is also a

strong suggestion that the gendered identity of the post-Soviet miner has become confused or fragmented.

In Soviet culture, the industrial proletariat had been the primary class, symbolized in generic propaganda by a masculine image – as opposed to the peasantry, who were effectively the secondary class, symbolized, as in Mukhina's famous sculpture *Industrial Worker and Collective Farm Girl* 1937, by a feminine image.[49] The identity of the proletariat was thus directly linked to the patriarchy of the Party and the state. In Savadov's photograph, the two nude men might correspond, by physique, to this model, although nudity in post-1934 Soviet images of the New Person were rare, perhaps to avoid homoerotic possibilities since homosexuality was regarded as an illness.[50]

The post-Soviet Ukrainian mining industry retained, until about 1998, some potential to keep alive this powerful myth of proletarian identity. The numerous miners' strikes from 1989 onwards might be viewed as revisitations of proletarian revolutionary power. Although in 1989 the strikes inadvertently contributed to the dissolution of the USSR and establishment of an independent, capitalist Ukraine, between 1997-8 they seemed to operate more traditionally, to oppose corrupt crypto-capitalist economics.[51] Indeed 1998 saw some epic events reminiscent of an earlier era of political struggle, such as the three-day march of 2000 miners from Pavlograd to Dnipropetrovsk to demand eight months' arrears of pay.[52] But, although the 600,000 Ukrainian miners represented a significant force for social disruption, they were also fighting a lost cause. The mining industry was technologically decrepit – a legacy from Soviet exploitation and lack of investment from the 1970s onwards.[53] The

decrepitude made Ukrainian coal unproductively expensive in relation to the coal available on the world market, and also dangerous to extract - as witnessed by a death count of 203 miners from serious explosions between April 1998 and March 2000.[54] The miners' demands, for full arrears of pay and pensions, and the end of foreign coal imports, were unfulfillable in the context of Ukraine's economic disarray in mid-1998. Moreover, if the government was to be enabled by Western finance to pay off the miners, it would mean their redundancy, since the World Bank and IMF seem to have earmarked the Ukrainian coal industry for demolition.[55]

In relation to this, the feminized images of miners offered by Savadov and Kharchenko have been seen in Freudian terms by David Elliott in *After the Wall*, as offering 'a shocking allegory of castration'.[56] They might also be construed, in the Lacanian terms favoured by Turkina and Mazin, as signifying the marginality and alienation attendant on the loss of patriarchal myth, brought about by the impact of globalized capitalism on the Ukrainian coal industry. There is a sense in which this possibility of interpretation is reinforced by historical aspects of the ways that Soviet patriarchy operated through and beneath Bolshevik propaganda.

The construct of the New Man was apparently gender-neutral – the masculine Russian phrase *novyi chelovek* was understood to mean 'New Person' and applicable to either sex. There was no official discourse on gender difference after the closure, in 1930, of the *Zhenotdel* – Women's Department of the Communist Party.[57] Party propaganda produced positive images of women, whose equality was decreed by the 1936 Constitution and reiterated ad nauseam, especially around March 8 – International Women's Day -, until the fall of the USSR.[58] Sexism and

phallocentrism, however, operated not only in the private, domestic sphere – to create a double burden for women, of paid work and domestic labour – but also in the public sphere, marked by the small number of women at the top of professions and political hierarchies, and even at the level of class identity.[59] The structures and strictures of official Soviet culture did little to eradicate the mindset embodied in an old Russian proverb: 'A chicken is not a bird and a woman [*baba*] is not a person'.[60] Indeed, the Russian artist, Nina Turnova, interviewed in 1998 attested to its continuation in post-Soviet culture.[61] Given this context and given that the mining area in Ukraine is ethnically and linguistically Russian, it does not seem far fetched to suggest that a feminized image of a male miner might convey to an East European, and particularly an Ukrainian audience a sense of the marginality and even, perhaps, dehumanisation of the miners' identity.

That this feminisation may also signify a contemporary, East European perception equating consumer culture with femininity, is suggested strongly by another image from the *Deepinsider* series, *Fashion Models in a Graveyard* 1997 (Fig. 9). In the view of Ukrainian critic, Alexander Soloviov, the image makes 'sacreligious' juxtaposition between the vampy, vampirish models, and the setting, an old Ukrainian Orthodox cemetery complete with mourning wreaths and what appear to be three bare-chested gravediggers (although Soloviov asserts that the background scene represents a traditional open casket funeral).[62] This imaginary fashion-magazine page seems to define the desires of East European women in a way that links disrespect to established notions of decorum, with female complicity with consumerism, defined here in terms of European designer labels and priced up in US dollars. A similar sort

of complicity seems to be flagged up by Estonian artist and fashion designer, Inessa Josing in an installation shown in Luxembourg's *Epoque* boutique during *Manifesta 2*, 1998. *What must I do to be saved? The Temptations of Fashion* (Fig.10), makes a similarly 'sacrilegious' juxtaposition between religious values, signified by the reference to Acts 16.30, and the 'temptations' for young women to become objects of male consumption, offered by consumer culture. On one level this seems to illustrate Lasch's suggestion that: 'The apparatus of mass promotion…allies itself with sexual "revolution"…It emancipates women and children from patriarchal authority, however, only to subject them to the new paternalism of the advertising industry…'[63]. On another level, however, both works seem to have a potential moralising edge which might be seen to point backwards to Soviet mythologisations of women as the guardians of domestic and moral purity, as well as forwards to a new mode of self-identity for women brought about by the influx of globalized capitalism, with its advertising images of women as sex objects, unprecedented in Soviet culture.[64] Estonian art critic Barbi Pilvre argues in *Private Views* that in contemporary Estonian culture – and, she suggests, in that of other East European countries – there is a strongly essentialist belief that femininity means being tied to the spaces of consumerism. Beauty and fashion apparently represent a new and attractive 'freedom' for women. In 1996 *Eesti Ekspress*, an Estonian weekly newspaper, adopted the phrase 'babe-culture' to describe young women's pursuit of fashion and beauty as a means to get rich husbands. Even prostitution, Pilvre argues, is not seen by women as necessarily a bad thing, but treated as a 'natural order of things' and as a potential means to economic success.[65] This is certainly fortunate for the East

European networks of organized crime in whose economy prostitution plays a substantial part.[66]

Works by two Hungarian women suggest this situation, with its implicit patriarchal bias, is not confined to Estonia. *In Front of the Curtain* 1998 by Agnes Szepfalvi, for example appropriated what is seen in Hungarian art discourse as the masculine space of the oil painting, to depict the commodity transaction of prostitution.[67] Also in 1998 Krista Nagy appropriated the public consumerist space of an advertising billboard in Budapest to juxtapose a 'babe' image of herself with the text 'I AM A CONTEMPORARY ARTIST' (Fig. 11). According to Iris Muller Westermann's essay in *After the Wall*, this was soon inscribed with sexist graffiti such as 'You whore' as if to underscore the embedded contradictions of image and text within patriarchal Hungarian culture.[68]

The problem of masculine focus and domination is not exclusive to Hungary, but has also been addressed by Russian artist Tatiana Antoshina. Her 1997 ceramic sculptures *Yeltsin Come Out* (Fig. 12) and *Promenade*, use the medium and style of Soviet images of urban folklore to commemorate the 'narcissistic efforts' of fellow Russian, Alexander Brener, to attain heroic status by his outrageous 'actions'.[69] Evidence in *Moscow Art Magazine* no.22 1998 that Brener indeed achieved such status, supports the suggestion made by Kivimaa in *After the Wall*, that these images offer an ironic acknowledgement of the centrality of the male artist in contemporary (and past) Russian art.[70]

The combination of these visual and critical sources with numerous examples of other documentary evidence in recent publications by women from all over Eastern Europe,

strongly suggests that the psychological effects of the collapse of patriarchy, as defined by Turkina and Mazin, have been accompanied by a continuation and even growth of patriarchalism within post-Soviet culture at a socio-economic level.[71] This conflicts heavily with the picture of the collapse of patriarchy offered by Castells in volume two of *The Information Age*.

For Castells, the collapse of the patriarchal structures of communism, particularly in the USSR, is attributable to the disintegration of the patriarchal family, due to the pressures of globalisation. The crux of his argument is the assertion that: 'If the patriarchal family crumbles, the whole system of patriarchalism… will be transformed' in the sense of being expunged.[72] He attempts, unconvincingly, to map a Western interpretation onto East European statistics about changes between 1970 and 1990 in the rates of birth, marriage, divorce, one-parent families and inclusion of women in employment.[73] In this way, he includes Eastern Europe into a world-wide picture of the social benefits of globalisation, as leading inevitably to the growth of feminisms and the disappearance of socio-economic patriarchy. Treating the continued existence of sexism and patriarchal behaviours as a temporary, male response to loss of power, Castells pins his hopes upon the 'strong women' created by the paradoxes of the Soviet system:

> 'the new generation of women, educated in the values of equality, and with room to express themselves personally and politically, seem to be ready to crystallise their individual autonomy in collective identity and collective action. It is easy to predict a major development of the women's movement in Eastern Europe, *under their own cultural and political forms of expression*.'[74]

Although he is careful to underline the multicultural diversity of globalized feminist movements, Castells' basic model is that of Western feminists' struggle against the patriarchal family for legalized equality and economic rights, especially the right to work.[75]

These, however, were rights that were constitutionally guaranteed to Soviet women from 1936 onwards. They were embodied throughout the USSR and satellite states in images of the strong New Woman and photographs of 'real-life' heroines of Soviet labour, such as those cited in Mare Tralla's interactive CDROM *her.space* 1997-8 as part of her own identity formation.[76] From the 1940s onwards there was a high proportion of women in paid employment, including jobs traditionally considered masculine.[77] This continued into the post-Soviet era - as exemplified by the saga of Elena Marchuk, a 'hero' of the 1998 Ukrainian miner's strike, who went on hunger strike outside Krasnodar Civic Hall for more than three weeks, for the sake of nine month's back-pay.[78] For Soviet women, however, to be in employment was not only a response to personal economic necessity, but also a duty that received more or less emphasis in relation to the shifts of Communist Party policy and geo-historical context. According to Izabella Kowalczyk, for example, the initial emphasis in Poland on women's employment 1947-55 shifted to a focus on the housewife-mother role in the later 1950s and again in the 1970s.[79] Employment was not perceived by all women as liberation, a point illustrated by Mare Tralla, who describes Estonian women as being 'forced to work' so that the concept of liberation was to stay at home, finally won in 1988 but only until the youngest child was three years old.[80]

With the abandonment of the Soviet 'rhetoric of equality' by the new nation states, freedom for women became freedom from being the property of the state, and from being constrained to work or to participate in government and Party structures under a quota system.[81] This construct of liberation, which seriously conflicts with that of the West, arguably constitutes a rejection of the idea of the strong woman as a false, patriarchally imposed ego-image. Joanne Sharp, in *Private Views* argues that this is one reason for current disinclination to campaign for legal political rights. There are women's political parties in Eastern Europe but they are small, fragmentary and subject to sexist exclusions – such as the refusal of the Central Election Committee to register the Women's Party of Ukraine for the 1998 elections, despite two court rulings on the illegality of this refusal.[82] In addition, much of the discourse on legal rights would seem to have been largely imposed and funded from the West.[83] Freedom, thus, also became the freedom to occupy what Western feminists would view as traditional, patriarchally defined spaces of femininity – decoration, mother, domestic slave, whore.[84] While this is interpreted by Sharp as a 'masculinisation of culture', I would rather argue that it is more like a licence to make explicit and fully exploit the pre-existing masculinized culture.[85]

Within this context, feminism is often seen by both men and women as the last resort of the ugly and undesirable woman, or linked to homosexuality.[86] Even women who look to personal role models of strong Soviet women provided by their mothers, tend to be disinclined to join feminist or women's organisations.[87] The connotations of feminism in Eastern Europe, coupled with the sense of feminism being a Western irrelevance because of its emphasis on employment and legal rights, seems to prompt

preference for a concept of gender-free art.[88] Sometimes, as in Hungary this preference is supported by discourse on Modernism, but arguably in the main it seems rooted in an internalisation of the patriarchal, but ostensibly gender-neutral, Soviet construct of the New Person.[89] From this source too, given that agency in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts is understood to be masculine, perhaps stems the predominance of male artists in discourse on gendered identity.[90] This may also relate to a sense that they have lost the most from the geo-political changes and impact of the centre-periphery model, but it may relate more particularly to their sense of ownership of the discursive space to address the crisis and an assumed ideological right to do so – which women because they barely exist as subjects, do not have.[91] Castells pays lip-service to the crucial difference between Western and ex-Soviet bloc patriarchal structures that fuels current East European antipathy to feminism, but disregards it in his argument. The overall effect is to suggest that with the demise of communism, Eastern Europe has, should and will become more like the West. This, as much as the implication that globalisation is beneficial, locates Castells' argument about the collapse of patriarchy, with the forces of Western liberal democracy concerned with integrating the East by pressure to conform to Western economic and social models – privatisation, free market economy and institutionalized women's rights as a fix for gender issues – through managed exclusions, selective inclusions and the establishment of various interventionist, non-government organisations. While this might seem no more than colonial assimilation by another name, much is made of the need for recognising and tolerating the multicultural diversity of Eastern Europe, hence perhaps, Castells' passing reference to cultural difference.

By contrast, Turkina and Mazin's argument, and most of the works I have been looking at, arguably represent a particular aspect of a nascent East European post-colonial discourse which stands in critical, even oppositional relation to these liberal-democratic processes of integration.[92] This, special aspect of the emerging post-colonial discourse appears to express its resistance to integration, by the use of gender issues to assert cultural difference. It might be seen, from a particular Western feminist standpoint as critical and political, bearing some kinship with the poststructuralist feminist strategies noted by Griselda Pollock 'as politically incompatible with those contemporary forms of feminist thought and practice which still inhabit the nineteenth-century bourgeois problematic of equal rights'.[93] It might also be seen as utilising media, modes of practice and theoretical language that have familiar resonances in the West although used to articulate a very different context. In a sense, Eastern Europe had to find its analytical and descriptive sources in Freudo-Lacanian theory, because the theorisation of identity within the Soviet system, focused on the gender-free construct of the New Person, provided no means to talk of gendered identity.[94] Yet, while perhaps necessary, this borrowed language is also strategic, for it frames discourse about the East by the East, in language formations legitimated in Western cultural discourse, potentially enabling the dissolution of the boundaries between centre and periphery. Borrowings from Western Freudo-Marxism meanwhile underscore resistance both to Soviet-style Marxism and to globalized capitalism.

Much of East European post-colonial discourse on gender, particularly as represented in *After the Wall* is, however, tentative. Turkina and Mazin talk of body-based art in

terms of therapy rather than criticism, which echoes the tendency of artists such as Libera to define their work in personal terms, evading the use of the words 'critical' or 'political'. In Eastern Europe these terms are seen to connote 'dissident' practices, complicit with lingering Cold War views of Eastern states as 'bad' – currently fuelled by Western reportage focused on the activities of the Eastern 'Mafia'. To employ the terms 'critical' and 'political' within an East European theoretical framework would therefore have potential to distract the attention of the Eastern audience from globalisation, as the real focus of criticism.[95] Also, while Mare Tralla has spoken of her 'strategic' adoption of the 'feminist' label in order to 'break into the West', and some East European critics have published in the trenchantly feminist British/international journal *n.paradoxa*, much of East European discourse on gender is ambivalent to such labelling, conscious of cultural preferences for genderless theoretical approaches.[96]

The explicitly genderless approach to post-colonial discourse taken by Slovenian critical theorist, Slavoj Zizek in his essay 'The Post Political Denkverbot' is much less tentative. The essay, first published in the Croatian magazine *Bastard* in 1998 and reprinted in the 'Anthology' section of *After the Wall*, offers a view of the East European identity crisis, as intimately connected with the social, political and economic exclusions and ruptures of 'democratic' rights/values of countries by globalized capitalism. For Zizek, the heart of the problem lies in the 'postmodern post-politics' of the dominant 'post-ideological' globalized capitalist order, which has depoliticized society by devaluing and outlawing conflict rooted in 'universalising

ideologies', replacing these with negotiated compromise based on expert information which addresses concrete demands or needs of particularized groups.[97]

This comes close to the arguments raised by Marcuse and expanded by Lasch and Koval, relating to the ways in which technologized, bureaucratic, consumer capitalism takes control of and manipulates, perceptions of needs.[98] Zizek does not, however, reproduce the arguments about infantilism or narcissism, and what Koval treats as an internalisation of patriarchy expressed as a yearning for authority, Zizek defines as a vague sense of something greater being 'wrong' than the specifics of the localized problem besetting the individual in context.[99] What Zizek argues is that the 'tolerance' and forbearance of globalized capitalism 'forecloses' on abilities to articulate/symbolize the problem on a universal rather than just a local scale. He proposes a 'radical re-politicisation to the left', a new Marxism in which 'proletarian' is a militant subject position fighting for universal truth, that can be taken by any individual in the struggle against globalized capitalism – a definition which relates to the ideas of French Marxist, Etienne Balibar.[100] Zizek defines 'universalism' here as ' the properly political domain of one's particular fate as representative of global injustice', struggling against the reduction of the state to 'a police agent servicing the (consensually established) needs of market forces and 'multiculturalist tolerance humanitarianism' in which the vaunted notion of 'democracy' has become subject to interpretation in accordance with the interests of globalized capitalism.[101]

Zizek seems to be arguing for a return of a strong symbolic order in the Lacanian sense – phallic and patriarchal - to offer full subject identity to East Europeans and others peripheralized by global capitalism, on the implicit understanding that this

identity is illusory and full of contradictions.[102] The patriarchy may be metaphorical, in the Lacanian sense that no-one, man or woman, owns the phallus and it is not a biological but a linguistic construct.[103] Moreover Zizek's formulation potentially allows for gender based 'injustice' to be articulated if only on a universal rather than a local level. Here it is possible to think of a parallel with Radical Feminist constructions of patriarchy as a universal 'wrong'.[104] Yet, Zizek's writings on women during the 1990s, which take Lacan's social division of sexual difference as given, indicate that he is no feminist sympathizer.[105] Moreover his expressed aversion to 'postmodern identity politics', and, most tellingly his identification with the 'universalism' of St Paul's version of Christianity, in which there were 'no men and women', emphasize that his notion of universalized struggle is, like the politics which created the New Man, strictly gender-free.[106]

As if to justify marginalizing contextually specific issues of gender (and ethnicity) from his model of post colonialism, there seems to be a sense within Zizek's argument that such issues can be too easily 'depoliticized' by the forces of 'multiculturalist tolerance humanitarianism'. Castells' argument about the collapse of patriarchy might be seen to offer one example in support of this implication, the editorial attitudes in *After the Wall* I suggest, offers another.

After the Wall, seen as a translocational, hybrid space, might seem an ideal platform for post-colonial debate. In addition, it implicitly celebrates the growth of a network of East European art infrastructures that Igor Zabel, in his 1997 paper *We and the Others*, had theorized as necessary to prevent Western 'orientalist' appropriation of East European art.[107] This growth is implied, for example, in the catalogue's co-

editorship by Bojarna Pejic, the contributions from a range of other critics and curators who also operate in both the East and the West – Iara Boubnova, Piotr Piotrowski, Ekaterina Dyogot, Zabel and Zizek – and, within the post-1989 potted histories of each nation, by references to the establishment of an array of contemporary art centres and websites, mainly funded, as was the catalogue, by the Soros Foundation.[108]

Within this catalogue however, Turkina and Mazin's argument enables David Elliott, from his authoritative position as Director of Stockholm's Moderna Muzeet and ambitious member of the Western art establishment, to define East European art practices and theorisations concerning gendered identity, as non-political forms of personal and national therapy – in effect a local affair:

> Within art theory and criticism, psychoanalytic theory has played an increasingly important part, it almost seems as if the New Europe is undergoing a form of therapy and the role of culture is to relieve it from its burden of trauma.[109]

Co-editor Bojana Pejic, in highlighting the tentativeness of East European discourse on gender, and artists' ambivalence towards being seen as critical or political, serves to support Elliott's depoliticising contention by effectively denying the existence of post-colonial or feminist politics.[110] Ultimately, the impression given by the editorial and curatorial authorities from both West and East – despite contrary indications from some of the contributions – is that the art is not dangerous and falls into the contemporary post-modern, post-political mould of art as personal expression, thus is fit for Western consumption, as a voyeuristic glimpse into East European navel-

gazing. It must be said, however, that Pejic's essay evinces an ironic awareness of the potential for the exhibition/catalogue to be read as an exotic 'matrix of …a post-communist, Politically Correct, and to some extent Personal Computer art culture…a new paragon: that of a PC Eastern Art'.[111]

Discourse on the collapse, or otherwise of patriarchy becomes re-focused – by Elliott – away from critiques of globalisation, towards therapeutically 'reflective' celebrations of the demise of communism as, 'an ideology that has been firmly consigned to the past and is now an irrelevance, if not an embarrassment to the present and the future'.[112] Implicit in Elliott's statement is a triumphalist sense that, as a result of the fall of communism, Eastern Europeans have, and should, become more like 'us'. It echoes an attitude, exemplified by Castells, which I have already argued to characterize Western integration strategies.[113] In true liberal-democratic style, the catalogue also stresses multiculturalism, containing written and visual materials from twenty-two of the new nation-states that were once, either under Soviet rule or that of the Yugoslav Republic, without giving too much dominance to the voice of any one geo-political area. Yet there seem to be limits to this multicultural tolerance, as exemplified by the subtle contrast between the 'history' of the first post-Soviet decade provided by *After the Wall*, and that offered in *Moscow Art Magazine* no.22, just a year earlier.

Moscow Art Magazine no.22, was an equally translocational vehicle for debate, a special edition published on the internet containing some of the same voices – even some of the same essays – but orchestrated by the Russian international curator Viktor Misiano, from Moscow, through the Marat Guelman dealer gallery website, in both

Russian and English. In this publication, Brener rather than Kulik appeared as the focal point of 'Moscow actionism', and his actions were identified as significant and relevant oppositions to Western globalized capitalism, and a focus for emulation by young Bulgarian artists, even if his terroristic methods were to be deplored.[114]

At the private view of *Interpol*, Stockholm 1996, Brener had destroyed a work by Guo Wenda, a New York Chinese artist feted by the West for his multicultural and humanistic projects.[115] In January 1997, Brener spraypainted a big green dollar sign on Kasimir Malevich's *Suprematismus. White Cross on Grey* 1920-27, in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.[116] Both acts were treated by the authorities as criminal vandalism, whereas Brener claimed them as artistic actions which enacted critiques of Western market and art-historical appropriation strategies, from a renovated Marxist standpoint.[117]

While Guo Wenda arguably represented the contemporary 'orientalist' art market fashion for Chinese art, Malevich had been a potent symbol of cultural difference between East and West within East European discourse since the 1980s, used by Yugoslavian artists in the 1980s-90s and used also by the Moscow Conceptualists.[118] Moscow Conceptualism, with which Brener was associated in the early 1990s, identified Malevich not as a hero but as prime signifier of early avant-garde demands for Party canonisation, which were claimed to have provided the foundation for the imposition of a single Party approved practice in 1934.[119] The function of this argument seems to have been, both to question the value placed on Malevich by the West, and to resist Western desire to view recent, contemporary East European art as a continuation of the early avant-garde.[120] Brener, however, took the argument to a

very literal extreme which seemed to strain the tolerance of the Western establishment.

In *After the Wall*, Brener was placed as an also-ran to Kulik (who, after all has only bitten artists and critics) and Russian critic Ekaterina Dyogot provided a new history of Russian art, that linked Malevich to contemporary art on the basis of a shared concern for 'absurdism', that neatly deleted Socialist Realism from art history, and just as neatly gutted contemporary art of its gendered politics.[121] Such an approach could be argued to go some way to appease the desires of the Western establishment, condoning its appropriation of Malevich, supporting its antipathy to political art, and neutralising the threat posed by Brener to the heart of capitalism – property – by manipulated and carefully selective inclusion, as minor exemplar of a narcissistic and infantile part of a localized therapeutic process.

There is a sense in which Zizek's inclusion in the *After the Wall* catalogue is also, to some extent, managed. Despite being perhaps the best known, in the West, of the contributors to the 'Anthology' section, Zizek receives no explicit mention either by Elliott or Pejic. Pejic does offer some ambivalent discussion of discourse critical of Western strategies of integration and the influx of global capital, but she implicitly locates Zizek's advocacy of 'ideological critique' of 'post-ideological' politics as irrelevant in the contemporary East, since 'High Capital is not yet there'.[122] Zizek's essay thus becomes one of a number of exotic manifestations of localized East European cultural debate – merely interesting background reading. In addition, Zizek's use of psychoanalytical language leaves him partly open to being categorized, with Turkina and Mazin, as a cultural therapist.

Yet, his apparent eschewal of gender issues and of therapeutic diagnoses on the one hand, and on the other hand his emphasis on creating a reconstituted Marxist phallic order that encompasses more than just the former Eastern bloc, conflict markedly with the depoliticising and triumphalist assertions of Elliott. Thus far, his genderless approach to East European post-colonial discourse seems to be justified, in its apparent resistance to colonisation by Western liberal-democratic multiculturalism. The question of what other benefits Zizek's approach may offer is more problematic. It could be argued that the proposed new phallic order would create an illusionary, universalized identity that might be able to contest the power of globalized capital. Alternatively it could be argued that such an identity thus adopted by the East could invoke a, perhaps grateful, Western regression to its own 'lost' Cold War, Modernist, patriarchal myth. In this respect, the gender-free approach does not threaten the surviving vestiges of this myth in the contemporary Europatriarchal structures of Western cultural legitimation, which are still predominantly white and male, promoting, curating and collecting art which also, is still predominantly white and male. [123]

The gender-free aspect of Zizek's proposed trajectory of post-colonial discourse, while it aligns with East European preferences, seems deliberately to re-invoke the approach to political thought that formed these preferences, and which can be seen also in the more recent trend of French Marxism favoured by Zizek, exemplified by the writings of Louis Althusser and Balibar.[124] The post-1930s Marxist-Leninist notion of gender-neutrality seemed to arise out of discourse that treated issues of sexuality and gender as diverting attention from the proper area of political, class-

based struggle to build a Socialist utopia.[125] Zizek also seems to treat such issues as diversionary, in relation to the class struggle of his broadly redefined proletariat, as militating against the refocusing of debate on ideology.

This seems somewhat contrary to the critical potential of blending Marxist thought with Freudo-Lacanian theory which, unlike traditional Marxism engages with issues of sexuality and gender. Socialist Feminist writers such as Griselda Pollock and Juliet Mitchell argued in the 1970s and 1980s that while class and gender issues cannot be collapsed into each other, psychoanalytic ideas can and have been used to expand specificity in understanding the operation of ideology.[126] The arguments of Mitchell, in particular, received support from Lasch who noted in 1979: 'All but the most rigid and dogmatic of socialists have now admitted the justice of feminist criticism and incorporated it into their own work'.[127] Even Marcuse, although not himself given to much specificity, criticized Norman O. Brown's gender-free utopian fantasy for lack of attention to the: 'mediations which transform the latent into the overt content, sex into politics'. [128]

Zizek's decision to exclude consideration of such mediations seems to pivot on his perceptions of the ways in which elements of critiques of ideology in relation to both race and gender have been marshalled into the service of Western liberal democracy's globalized bureaucracy, by being incorporated into legalistic systems of social management, and thus moved out of the arena of ideological conflict. In his favour, it needs to be acknowledged that this sort of legalistic incorporation is precisely what Castells celebrates in his overview of the positive role of multiculturally diverse feminisms in creating the new globalized future.[129] Yet, while these strategies have

arguably contributed to the fragmentation of feminism as a movement and reduced its appeal to young women, it has also, as Angela McRobbie has argued, engendered a broader and more complex range of critical discourse on gendered identity in the West, stimulated by non-Western critiques of Western feminism.[130]

Zizek's approach marginalizes, and effectively forecloses on the East European discourse on gender issues, that had been forced into conscious debate by the combined loss of patriarchal grand narrative and intensification of patriarchal behaviours linked to the influx of globalisation. As such, Zizek's approach seems to depoliticize these issues as effectively as Western liberal democracy seems to, because he too treats them as local. In this sense, Zizek's approach to post-colonial discourse appears to make as little threat to the entrenched patriarchalism of East European culture and society, as did the old Soviet phallic order, with its gender-neutral ideals.

Conclusion

From my Western viewpoint, the contrast between Zizek's robust, gender-free stance and the tentativeness of other writers towards gender politics, exemplifies the problematical nature of gender issues within the emerging East European post-colonial discourse that I set out to look at in this paper. Patriarchy, phallocentrism and sexism have not collapsed in Eastern Europe even though the Soviet phallic order has – this much is clear from the works and supporting critical theory that I have examined. Part of this problem seems rooted in lingering, internalized traces of Soviet ideological constructs particularly those of the New Man and 'equal by decree' woman, which seem to encourage women's complicity in the operation of patriarchy.

Another part of the problem seems related to the influx of globalized capitalism via Western liberal-democratic strategies of managed exclusion and selective inclusion, which maintain the centre-periphery experience, and, as I have suggested through the examples of Castells and *After the Wall,* operate to depoliticize issues of gender. East European post-colonial discourse taken as a whole, may be seen to address both aspects of the problem, for consumption both by its own and Western audiences, attempting to dissolve the centre-periphery boundaries by strategically using modes of visual and theoretical language familiar to the West, but applied to a different cultural context.

Differences between contexts of production and reception seem crucial to the potential success of the enterprise. What may be appropriate and valid in relation to Eastern Europe, for instance, implicit rather than explicit approaches to gender politics and a preference for genderless discourse, is open to a different field of interpretation in the West. The former, as Zizek implies, seems vulnerable to colonial 'depoliticization' by Western integration strategies. The latter, as exemplified by Zizek, seems to extend no threat to the entrenched patriarchalisms, either of Eastern Europe or of the West. The potential for a critical relation to both, implicit in the blend of Marxist with Freudo-Lacanian theory, seems to be denied. The main advantage of Zizek's re-assertion of utopian socialist universals seems to be its greater resistance to colonisation, and the refocusing of debate around ideology. What it seems to lack is a level of specificity that could address the ideological layers of patriarchalism endemic in East European culture. What it signals, are some of the contradictions arising out of the context(s) in which he speaks.

Peripheralising Patriarchy? Gender & Identity in Post-Soviet Art. A View from the West.

PAT SIMPSON

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ENDNOTES

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Illustration captions

Fig. 1. Zbigniew Libera, 'Universal Penis Expander', 1995, laser print. (Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.)

Fig. 2. Azat Sargsyan, 'Welcome to the Wall', 1998, black and white photograph of performance. Yerevan Biannual 'Avant Garde', ACCEA, Yerevan. (Photograph: *After the Wall*, vol. 2, p. 173.)

Fig. 3. Oleg Kulik, 'I Bite America and America Bites me', April 1997, colour photograph of performance.

(Photograph: Deitch Projects, New York.)

www.artseensoho.com/Art/DEITCH/kulik97/k2.html, 21/03/02.

Fig. 4. Alexander Brener (& wife), 'Rendezvous. Pushkin Square Moscow', 1994, black and white photograph of performance.

(Photograph: ARTINFO/ITAR-TASS)

www.artinfo.ru/artbank/scripts/english/title.idc?title_id=3738, 23/5/00.

Fig. 5. Georgii Gurianov, 'Baltic Fleet', 1994, acrylic on canvas.

150 x 150cm. (Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.)

Fig.6. Aleksandr Deineka, 'Dinner Break in the Donbas', 1935, oil on canvas.

199.5 x 248.5cm. State Art Museum of Latvia, Riga. (Photograph: Sysoev, P. *Aleksandr Deineka (Albom)*, Izobrazitel'noe iskusstva, Moscow, 1972, plate 66.)

Fig. 7. Rassim Kristev, 'Corrections', 1996-8, black and white photographs.

(Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.)

Fig. 8. Arsen Savadov and Oleksandr Kharchenko, 'Donbas-Chocolat', from 'Deepinsider' series, 1997, colour photograph.

Dimensions variable. (Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Arsen Savadov, 1997)

Fig.9. Arsen Savadov and Oleksandr Kharchenko, 'Fashion Models in a Graveyard', from 'Deepinsider' series, 1997, colour photograph.
Dimensions variable. (Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Arsen Savadov, 1997)

Fig. 10. Inessa Josing, 'The Temptation of Fashion. What Must I do to be Saved?', 1998, installation in shop window.
Manifesta 2, Luxembourg. (Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.)

Fig. 11. Krista Nagy, 'I AM A CONTEMPORARY PAINTER', 1998, c-print offset billboard.
Budapest. (Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.)

Fig. 12. Tatiana Antoshina, 'Yeltsin Come Out!', 1997, ceramic.
67 x 60 x 50cm. (Photograph: *After the Wall* exhibition, 1999, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.)